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ABSTRACT

There continues to be oppression among female athletes, even after the enactment of Title IX in 1972. Female athletes in secondary schools deal with low self-esteem, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, and depression. Female athletes struggle with societal pressures to maintain a model-like figure, while trying to train and perform for an athletic event. This 5-day curriculum focuses on secondary female athletes 16-18 years of age. The purpose of this curriculum is to educate these females on the discrimination they face, to provide them with tools to become aware of oppressive acts, to build self esteem and confidence, to provide awareness of racial discrimination among female athletes of color, and to provide role models of successful and talented female athletes. The curriculum covers (in order by day): (1) societal issues, stereotypes and incidents within female athletes; (2) how the media portrays male and female athletes differently; (3) questionnaires and activities the students can engage in, along with discussion of racism issues in female athletics; (4) salary differences between male and female athletes and societal pressures placed upon female athletes to perform to a societal ideal; and (5) positive aspects of being a female athlete. (JBJ)

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ED 391 132

Female Athletes Facing Discrimination

Curriculum Regarding Female Athletes

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by
Regina Palis

Department of Human Relations
and Multicultural Education

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Topic: Discrimination of Female Athletes

Target Group: Secondary Students, Ages 16-18 years and older. Female Athletes.

Sports: Individual and Group

Length of Lessons: 30-40 minutes

Discrimination of female athletes is an area which I feel needs immediate attention in the school system, local and national level of athletics. There continues to be oppression among female athletes, even after the enactment of Title IX in 1972.

Female athletes in secondary schools continue to deal with low self esteem, eating disorders, such as anorexia bulimia and depression. The athlete struggles with the societal pressures of maintaining a model-like figure, while trying to train and perform for an athletic event. Consequently, this low self-esteem can place dramatic effects on the athletes performance.

Society continues to reduce the amount of interest, funds, and opportunities for female athletes, compared to male athletics. With the enactment of Title IX, funding is now equally distributed. Although, the interest for women athletics are comparably low to men. Women of color continue to be victims in the world of athletics. Oppression of female athletes is seen through our media, school events, T.V. coverage, broadcasting, etc. The lack of creditability is disturbing.

This five day curriculum will focus on secondary female athletes ages 16-18 years. This group is experiencing a large amount of pressure from society and peers to look and behave a particular way. It is a period of discovering and accepting oneself. The purpose of this curriculum is to educate these females of the discrimination that is being placed upon them in our society. Provide the athletes tools to become aware of these oppression acts, to build their self esteem and confidence, provide awareness of racial discrimination among female athletes of color, and provide various role models that are talented and successful who were able to overcome the oppression placed upon themselves.

This curriculum will be categorized by days. Day #1 places emphasis on societal issues, stereotypes and incidents within female athletes. Day #2, will focus primarily on the media on how they portray male and female athletes differently through magazines and photographs. Day #3, contains questionnaires and activities the students can engage in, along with discussion of racism issues in the world of female athletes. Day #4, portrays the salary differences of males and female athletes. In addition societal pressures placed upon the female athlete to perform to a societal ideal. Day #5, discusses the positive aspects of being a female athlete, along with positive images of female athletes through photographs.

DAY # 1:

A. Introduction

1. Discussion of Female Athletes in the Media:

   This discussion includes female athletes who are in the media at that present time. This focuses on the amount of coverage females receive compared to male athletes.

2. Stereotypes Placed Upon Female Athletes:

   Discussion focuses on the stress society places on female athletes to look a particular way. This discusses various sports such as tennis, track, and especially gymnastics. The struggles female athletes face in maintaining their weight. Discussion is also placed on homophobia issues in female athletics.

3. Societal Issues:

   This topic intercedes with stereotypes. Pressures that society places upon female athletes to act and behave a certain way. Brief discussion of the amount of media coverage women receive. For example, T.V. coverage for male sports is 92%, while for women it remains to be 5%. Between the years of 1954-1990, Sports Illustrated covered only 4% of women athletes. Another 4% were of cheerleaders, wives, or girlfriends of male athletes (Burton Nelson, 1991, p. 195-196).

4. Definitions:

   Discuss terms such as:

   Oppression, Victim Blaming, Alienation and Racism regarding the female athlete. (See appendix for handout). Provide a clear understanding of these terms. Discuss how these terms may relate to the role of a female athlete.

5. Personal Experiences/ Question Time:

This includes any personal experiences of being a female athlete in the world of many male dominated sports, such as Rifle shooting competition, Biathlon, Cross Country Skiing, Cycle racing, etc. Provide a female athlete to share the trials she had to face in competition, and the hostility men may have had towards her performance. Finally, allow time for questions.

The objective of Day # 1 is to give a brief introduction of each of the topics to be covered and prepares the athletes for the discussions the next four days. The method of evaluation is to ask questions and discuss at the end of each lecture.

DEFINITIONS:

Oppression: Oppression exists when any entity (society, organization, group, or individual) intentionally or unintentionally inequitably distributes resources, refuses to share power, imposes ethocentric culture and/or maintains unresponsive and inflexible institutions toward another entity for its supposed benefit and rationalizes its action by blaming or ignoring the victim.

Oppression for Athletes: Denied resources such as funds, media coverage, etc. placed upon the female athlete. The opposer blames the victim for lack of attention or public and society awareness.

Victim Blaming: An ideology which blames the victim of an unfair system rather than blaming the system itself.

Alienation: To disrupt or avert the rights and power of an individual.

Racism: Oppression and exploitation of people on the basis of their belonging to a particular racial group or society. Racism is different from individual prejudice because it requires the possession of genuine power in a society. So racism is not merely prejudice, but prejudice with power. (Andrzejewski, 1993, p.6-7).

DAY # 2:

B. Female Athletes in the Media

1. Photograph/Magazine Review of Female Athletes Compared to Male Athletes: Discussion/Compare.

   Discussion: Out of 71 issues of Sports Illustrated, from January 10, 1994 to June, 1995, there were 67 photographs of male athletes on the front cover and only 3 photographs of women. Two of these issues were the swimsuit issues (of course), the other was a wife with her athletic husband and their children. In 1992, two number one college basketball teams were playing, Tennessee and Stanford, no television network covered this game (Burton Nelson, 1991, p. 195).

   Review of Photographs: Notice that when women are shown in the media, it usually contains sexual overtures. The grammar that the editor uses for females is also very different from the male sports. For example girls is used instead of women. Words such as wonderful, beautiful job, heart and character, etc. Would these terms be used for male athletics?

2. Speaker:

   Provide a female athlete to speak on her personal experiences and how she was portrayed in the media. A women of color would provide a diverse perspective.

3. Assignment:

   The students then engage in an interview with another female athlete. Encouragement should be given to interview people of color, if the female athletes are mostly white.

The objectives of Day # 2, is to create an awareness of the oppression that female athletes face through the media and society. This interview will engage them in a realistic viewpoint of female athletes.

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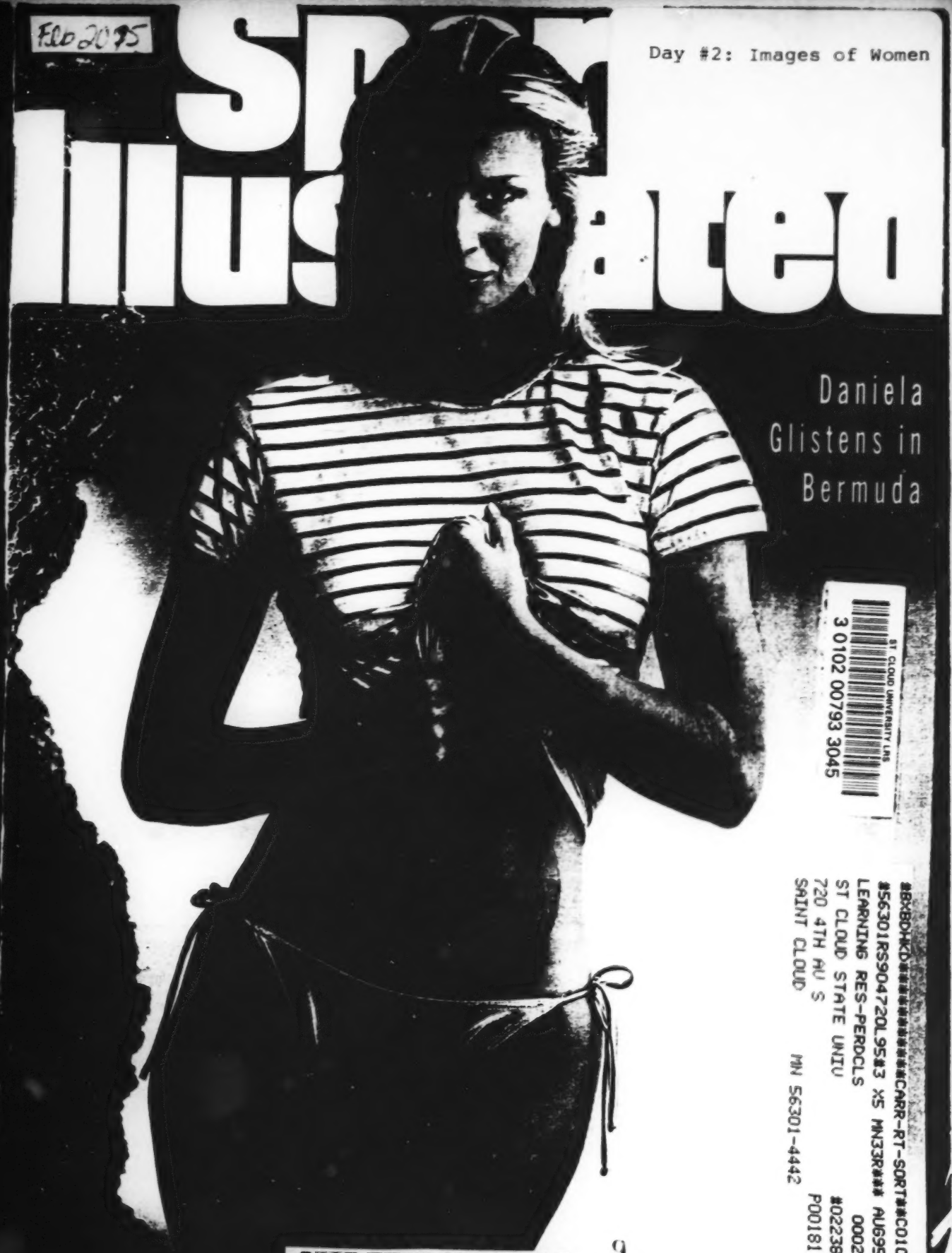
Day #2: Images of Women



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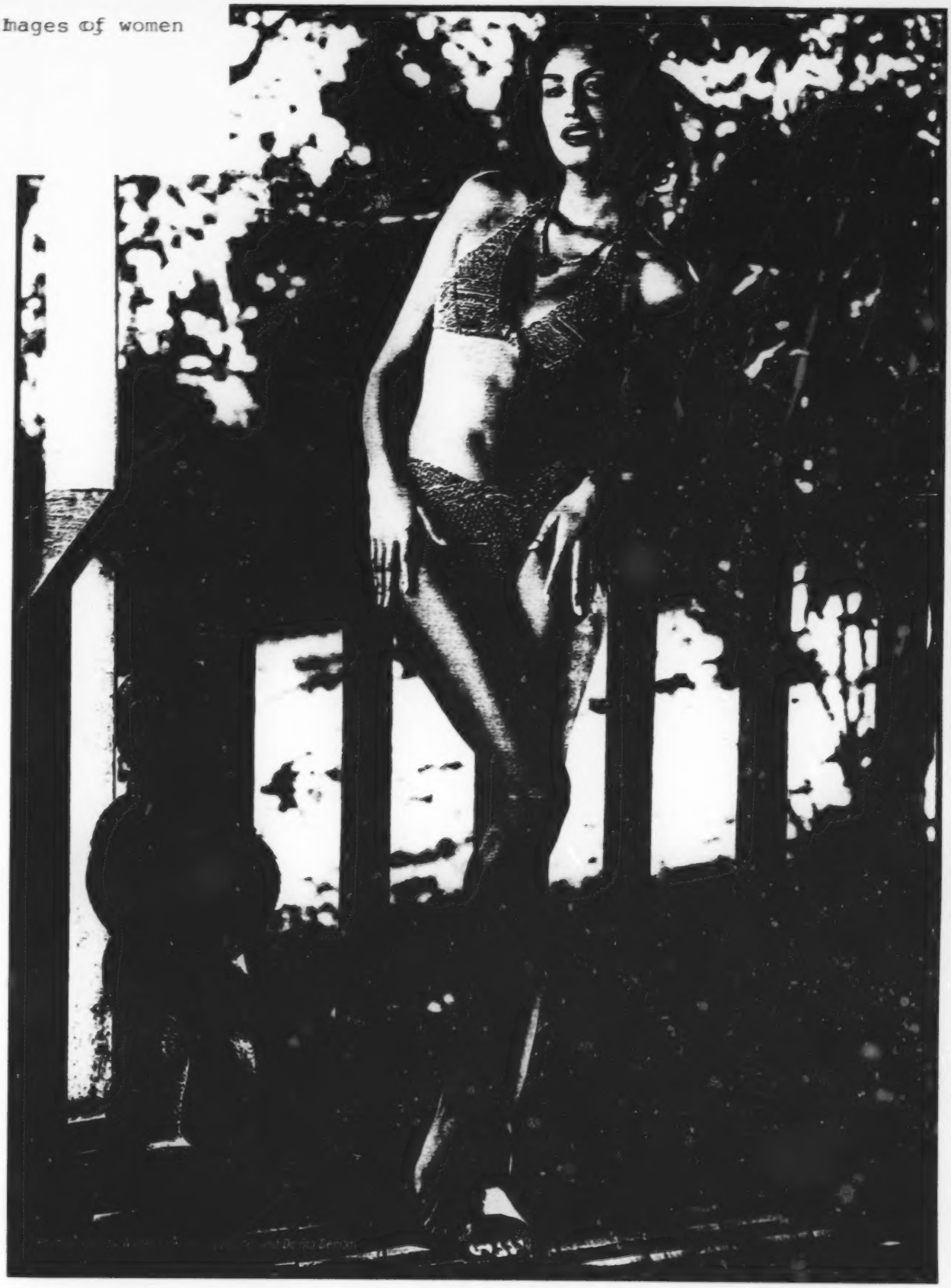
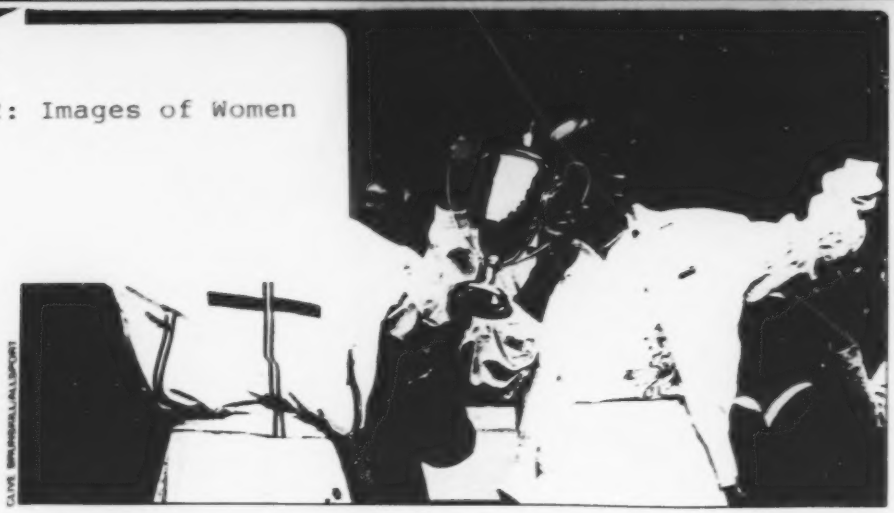


Day #2: Images of Women

Day #2: Images of Women



CLIVE BRUNSKILL/ALLSPORT

After a Wimbledon win (left) Zvereva and Fernandez lost their Slam bid at the U.S. Open.

Fernandez-Zvereva

lessons, and seldom heard the word *no*. By the age of nine she was the subject of newspaper coverage across Puerto Rico. As a teenager she was equally famous for her talent and for extravagances like her black Camaro sports car. She made frequent trips to the mainland for shopping and junior tournaments and received a fistful of college scholarship offers. Fernandez went to Clemson, made the NCAA finals as a freshman and turned pro six months later.

She is widely regarded as Top 10 in ability, although her best Grand Slam singles result came when she reached the Wimbledon semifinals last year. Her limitation has been a career-long struggle to control her anger, the root of which she thinks she understands. "I'm a perfectionist," she says. "And I'm insecure." This is why she prefers the companionable comfort of doubles to the greater exposure of singles. She says she went nuts in Indian Wells because she thought she heard snickering in the crowd when Raymond passed her. "I thought they were mocking me," she says.

Zvereva's slow, almost porridgelike temperament serves as the perfect antidote to Fernandez's emotional chaos. "I understand why Gigi explodes," she says. "You have to express your emotions, negative or positive. I do it too, but I do it in my head." Not always. Zvereva celebrated a quarterfinal victory at the Australian Open by lifting her shirt to reveal a sports bra, amusing fans but not the WTA, which is considering a fine.

Zvereva tried taking things seriously once. She didn't like it. A product of the Soviet sports machine, she rose to No. 5 and reached the final of the French Open by age 17. But she hated the pressure and resented her country's controlling authorities, and quietly resisted both.

Zvereva expressed herself emotionally through a determined individualism—and by listening to screaming music. As a girl growing up in Byelorussia, she danced alone in her room to black-market rock-and-roll. Her taste grew progressively harder. These days she listens to Metallica, AC-DC and old Led Zeppelin. She flirts with grunge and wears T-shirts that say things like KNOWLEDGE IS STUPID. She asks to borrow a piece of writing paper, then wipes her mouth with it.

If Zvereva is a subversive at heart, it is thanks to her father, Marat, who worked at the Soviet Army Club in Minsk and fought for the right to coach his daughter rather than turn her over to the machine. At her father's urging, Zvereva demanded a share of her winnings, which were going into Soviet coffers while she received only expense money. She signed with an American agency and began tanking matches, saying she wouldn't win unless she was paid. Zvereva feared she would be tossed in the gulag, but after tense negotiations the authorities backed down and let her keep the bulk of her earnings. "I'm very proud of that," she says.

But the experience left Zvereva exhausted and with a distaste for pressure. Her ranking fell to No. 30, and she has yet to rehabilitate it fully. Although nearly everyone considers her capable of being in the Top 5, she has refused since 1990 to employ a full-time coach. "I don't want to live up to anybody else's expectations," she says. "My ambition is fun."

Zvereva's offhandedness hides some dark moods. In her own way she is as high-strung as Fernandez. "The good news is, she has a lot of feelings," Fernandez says. "The bad news is, she keeps it all inside." If Fernandez explodes, Zvereva implodes, becoming sullen and uncommunicative.

When that happens, Fernandez and Zvereva always forgive each other, perhaps because they are aware of their own shortcomings. "There are plenty of times when I act totally weird, so I can't blame her when she explodes," Zvereva says. It was both hilarious and appropriate, then, when Fernandez and Zvereva began linking themselves to those incorrigible MTV characters. At a party before Wimbledon last summer, the pair delivered a sniggering satire of themselves. Fernandez, as Butt-Head, sneered, "I want to do something bad." Zvereva, as Beavis, urged her on. "Cool," she cackled. "Do it. Do it."

With that, Fernandez seized a racket and reduced it to smithereens before the roaring crowd. ■

FRED MULLANE/VIRGINIA SLIMS TENNIS

For Fernandez, self-expression takes many forms—and brings with it more than a few fines.

Day #2: Images of Men

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Sports Illustrated

JUNE 5, 1995

Slugger Matt Williams keeps putting up huge numbers

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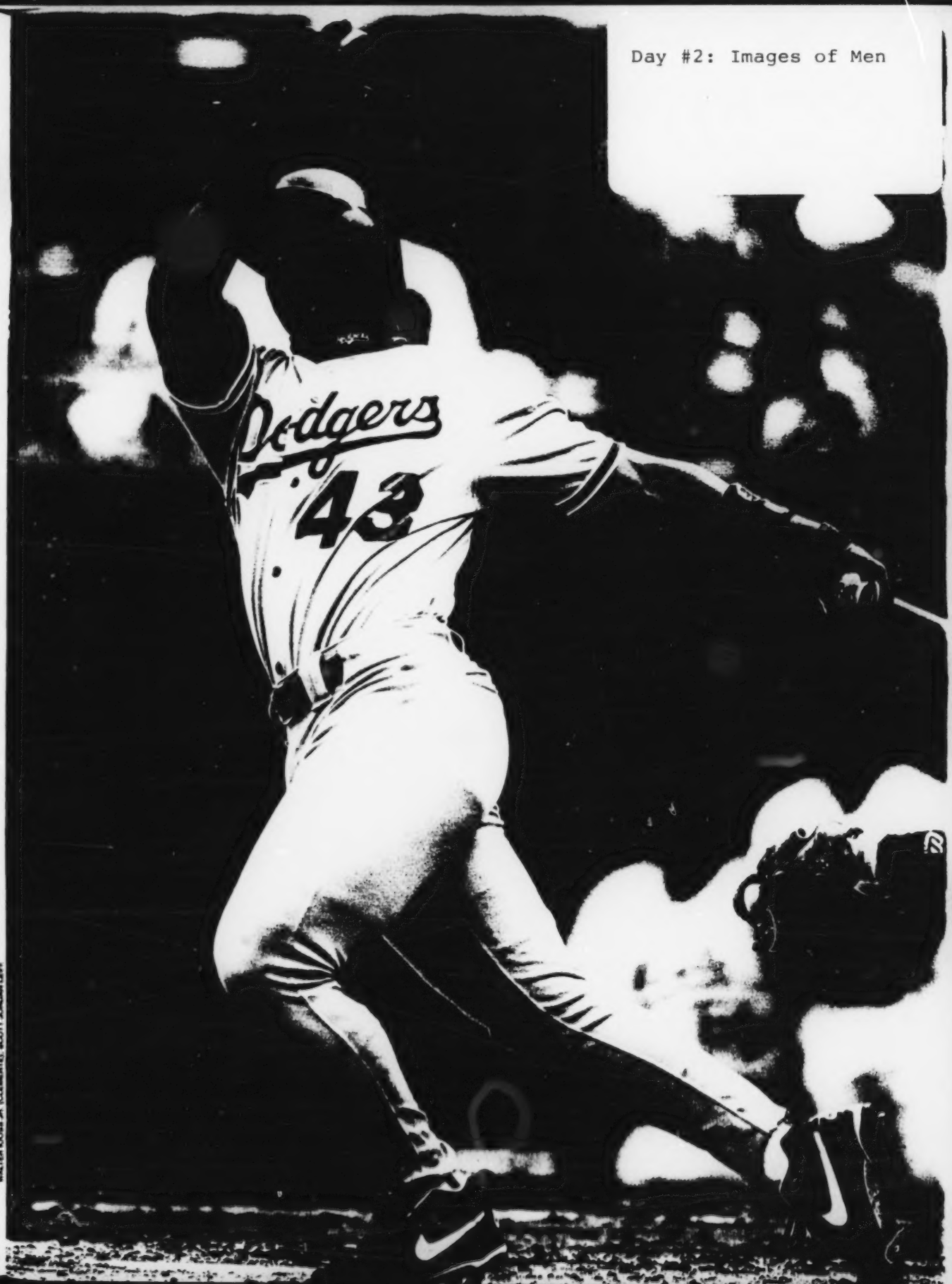
Day #2: Images of Men



WALTER IOOSS JR. (CLEMENTE); SCOTT JORDAN LEVY

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FEMALE ATHLETES:

1. Which athletic sport do you participate?

2. If you could play any sport, which one would you choose?

3. Do you feel you receive equal amount of attention as males do in their sports?

4. Do you prefer a male or female coach? Why?

5. Do you enjoy watching male or female sports on T.V. or both? Explain.

6. If you could play any male dominated sport, which one would you choose?

7. Do you feel athletic women are portrayed as equally as men athletes in the media?

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DAY # 3:

C. Outlook / Personal

1. Questionnaire for the Female Athletes:

   The focus is to create an awareness about how the athletes feel about themselves in their chosen sport. Address concerns they may have regarding their sport and gender issues.

2. Racism in Athletics:

   Discussion should emphasize the lack of people of color in the world of athletics, especially for women. Review the article of Jackie Joyner-Kersee. Also discuss of how lesbians are portrayed in athletics and society.

3. Discuss Ideas to Resolve Racism and Stereotypes of Athletic Women:

4. Open Discussion of Personal Experiences and Ideas:

   This includes any personal stories of being a female athlete in the world of sports. Discuss possible threats women may face from men for competiting in their sport. Especially in male dominated sports such as Rifle competition, Car Racing, Whitewater Kayaking.

   Susan Butcher has a great quote, "We don't need to ask men to move over, we're just there. We just have to do it now." (Burton Nelson, 1991, p. 213).

5. Assignment:

   The athletes must create posters to put up in their school. The posters must emphasize the positive aspects and roles of female athletes. The posters should contain positive photographs of female athletes.

   They must also include people of color and lesbian athletes. The students will be allowed to work in pairs.

DAY # 3:

The objectives of Day # 3, is to raise the issues of racism and homophobia. To discuss possible solutions, through our own phobias and stereotypes. The assignment will give them a "hands-on" approach in finding positive material regarding female athletes.

QUESTIONNAIRE: OUTLOOK:

1. Do you feel positive about yourself when you are involved in your particular sport?

2. In your opinion, do men receive more attention in sports then women? For example through the media, T.V. etc.?

3. Do you think women athletes diet more than men athletes?

4. Do you think women of color receive equal amount of coverage in the media as white female athletes?

5. What is your favorite magazine and why?

6. Do you feel respect from your coach/peers/family when you participate in your sport or event?

7. Who encourages you when your involved in a sport?

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Day #3: Racism in Athletics

Allsport/Tony Duffy

A Woman of Substance

Jackie Joyner-Kersee wants to win a gold in 1996, but there's something she wants more: to see kids have the opportunity to achieve greatness—or just have fun.

James W Kay

Whenever heptathlete Jackie Joyner-Kersee steps onto the track or field, she's not just out there to defend her Olympic honors (three gold medals, a silver and a bronze). She's out there to make strides for young women, too. At a time when more and more athletes are shrugging off the mantle of role model, the 33-year-old Joyner-Kersee never wavers. Committed to furthering the ideals of young people, she provides scholarships through the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Community Foundation and, more important still, puts in time working with kids in her hometown of East St. Louis, Illinois, whenever she can. This isn't to say that the greatest female athlete in the world is all business. When *WS&F* sat down to chat with her, for instance, she revealed that she's a soap-opera addict (who knew?). Here's what else Joyner-Kersee had to say.

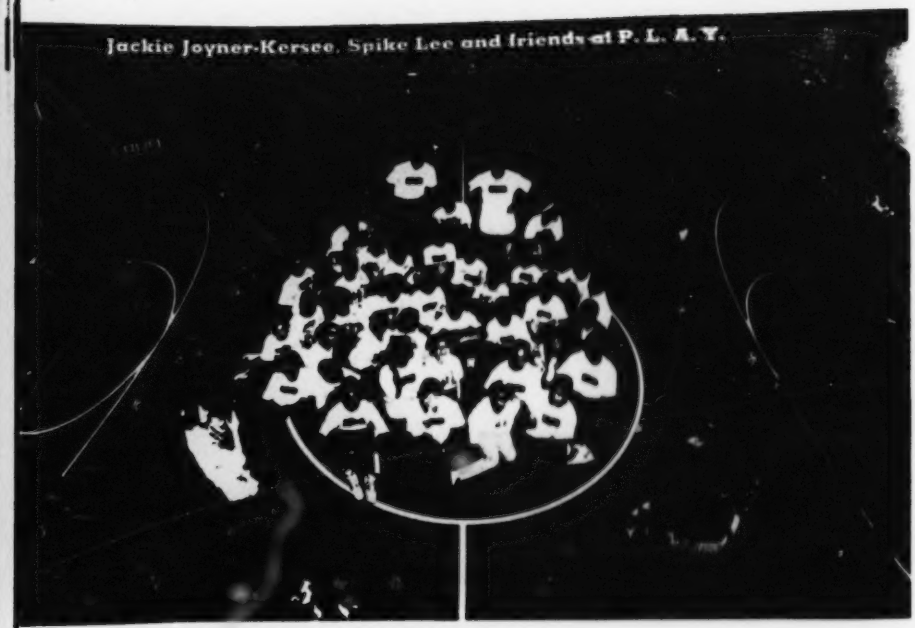
WS&F: As a spokesperson for Nike's P.L.A.Y. (Participate in the Lives of America's Youth), you've been helping wage war on the forces that are rapidly gobbling up recreational opportunities for kids. Is it true that a recent victim of those forces is the community center where you used to go as a child?

JJK: Yes. When I was coming up, we went to a place that was strictly for boys, but this guy used to open it and let us come in and play. Then the big Mayor Brown Center opened, but now that's closed, too. Hopefully within a year and a half, with our fund-raising efforts, we'll reopen it.

WS&F: When you were growing up, who were your role models?

JJK: I've always admired Wilma Rudolph, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Babe Didrikson. Also Flo Hyman. I remember watching her play the Japanese team in volleyball. And we thought *we* played volleyball! It was so neat, for once, to see a woman that tall. I didn't get to shake her hand. I got close, but not close enough. At one of the Women's Sports Foundation dinners, I met Wilma Rudolph and Rosa Parks. I never thought I'd get to meet them, but because of my athletics I've been fortunate.

WS&F: Do you think about those role models when you meet kids who look up to you in the same way?



Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Spike Lee and friends at P.L.A.Y.

JJK: No. I've never really thought about it like that, even though it might be. I find it touching, in a sense, that people want my autograph and they're in tears. I think, my God! I'm just happy that I'm in the position I'm in and that people would even take the time to talk to me.

WS&F: You haven't gotten used to the fact that people are in awe of you and so honored to meet you?

JJK: I appreciate the kindness; I just find it funny, particularly when people I grew up with say, "Let me have your autograph." "Get out of here! I know you're joking." But they're serious! I understand the position I'm in, but I also know that tomorrow there's going to be someone else. So I try to keep things in perspective.

WS&F: *Sports Illustrated* recently came out with a list of the 40 most influential athletes of the last 40 years. Does it make you angry that your name wasn't on it?

JJK: When someone told me there were no black women on the list, I said, "Oh, really. I guess I'll have to work a little harder" [*laughs*]. I just can't believe Chris Evert wasn't on it. I'm not happy that I wasn't, when I can make their cover three times, once with my sister-in-law. But I can't let that change me.

WS&F: You do, however, seem to be getting more recognition lately. For instance, in Nike's P.L.A.Y. commercials you're represented as an equal of Michael Jordan's.

JJK: When I came on board with Nike, it was agreed that Michael Jordan and I would be co-ambassadors of the program. I love Michael Jordan, but I also feel that our mindset has to change. Women are striving toward greatness, but society is not striving with us. Society is trying to keep us a step behind, but we're moving five steps ahead. Our performances are great. They're equal to our male counterparts'. It's not that we're trying to be superior to men; it's just that we'd like what we're doing to be showcased, so that young girls who want to do this can see that this is something they *can* do. If we can be role models and set a positive example, then that shouldn't be suppressed.

WS&F: Is it that much harder for a female athlete who's African-American to get endorsements and commercial backing?

JJK: It's not so much that it's harder; it's that, at times, you have to prove yourself over and over. One shot is not good enough. *I* don't think one shot is good enough, either. One thing I have in my favor is consistency. I've always asked that of myself, not from a commercial standpoint, but just from the standpoint of performing well. Don't be a flash in the pan. Eventually you realize that what they decide in the boardroom you have no control over. I feel that as an African-American woman the only thing I can do is continue to better myself, continue to perform well, continue to make sure that I'm a good commodity. If doors aren't opened for me, then maybe it will happen for someone else. I hope that someone who's watching me is also educating herself about what she can do to be consistent, what she can do to provide a message, what she can do to deliver a commodity as I've tried to do.

Heinz Tab

REVIEW

A Championship Season

Eating disorders. Sexual abuse. The Capriati burnout syndrome. Considering the bleak stories about young female athletes that pepper the news, Madeleine Blais's *In These Girls, Hope Is a Muscle* (Grove/Atlantic, 1995) is a welcome change. Blais, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, tells the story of the Amherst Hurricanes girls' basketball team, tracking them through a championship season and exploring the ties that bind them in pursuit of a common goal: to be the best.

Blais wasn't a sports fan when she began following the Hurricanes: she only learned of the team's existence because one of its members was her baby-sitter. Struck by the girl's confidence, she first told the story of the Hurricanes in a memorable 1993 *New York Times Magazine* article.

Now, in its expanded version, the tale is a testament to how wise, focused and happy girls can be when competitive sports are helping them shape their identity. Allowing the young athletes to speak eloquently for themselves, Blais uncovers camaraderie, cockiness, courage—indeed, she finds champions.

—Jane Gottesman

Ina VanDerBeek

DAY # 4:

D. Societal Issues

1. Outlook Society has on Female Athletes:

   Discussion involves why Sports Illustrated, had only 3 photo's of women within one year, two being swimsuit editions. The portray of the fit, slim, model-looking athlete. Why so many female athletes are anorexic. The pressures and stereotypes society places upon female athletes. Influence of age society has for women. How many articles are written on famous women athletes who are 50 and 60 years old. Subsequently, there are many outstanding athletes at this age.

2. Salary Differences:

   There continues to be significant difference between men and women funds in sports. (See The Chronicle of Higher Education 8, April, 1992: p. A37-A40).

3. Open Discussion:

   Discuss the opportunities women have compared to men. Present the oppression females of color have compared to men of color. Discuss the Title IX, enacted in 1972. Discuss amount of funding received in their particular sport, e.g. new uniforms, travel costs, etc. compared to male sports.

The objectives for Day # 4, are to bring an awareness to the athletes the discrimination of pay and funding for female athletes. Education of Title IX, and to present societies outlook on female athletes. The open discussion will be the means of evaluation. They need to develop concrete ideas of dealing with racism and funding differences in athletics.

DAY # 5:

E. Description

1. Discuss Positive Outlooks for Female Athletes:

   Lecture will focus on accepting oneself and body type. Discuss the aspects of dieting and how it is related to athletic performance. To feel positive about yourself while playing sports and while not involved in sports. How to deal with societies/peer/family pressures of performing and behaving a particular way in athletics. This discussion should also include personal experiences from a female athlete.

2. Review Positive Photographs of Female Athletes:

   Review and discuss the photographs with the athletes. (See following photographs).

3. Review Posters made for the School and Discuss:

4. Speaker:

   Provide a female athlete, preferably a women of color. She could provide a brief speech of the positive roles female athletes can provide for society.

The objectives for Day # 5, is to review issues discussed the past five days. Provide feedback and awareness to what the athletes have learned. This day should conclude with a positive image in the athletes minds, so they may have tools to deal with societies pressures in athletics. Provide continued encouragement to the female athletes and resources to further educate them about the issues discussed.

Day #5: Positive Images

A day in the life of the active woman

6:30 a.m.

Carrie Bucklin, a marketing director from New London, New Hampshire, casts her first line for the spawning Atlantic salmon in the morning mist of the Miramishi River in New Brunswick, Canada.

Photo by Robert Bossi

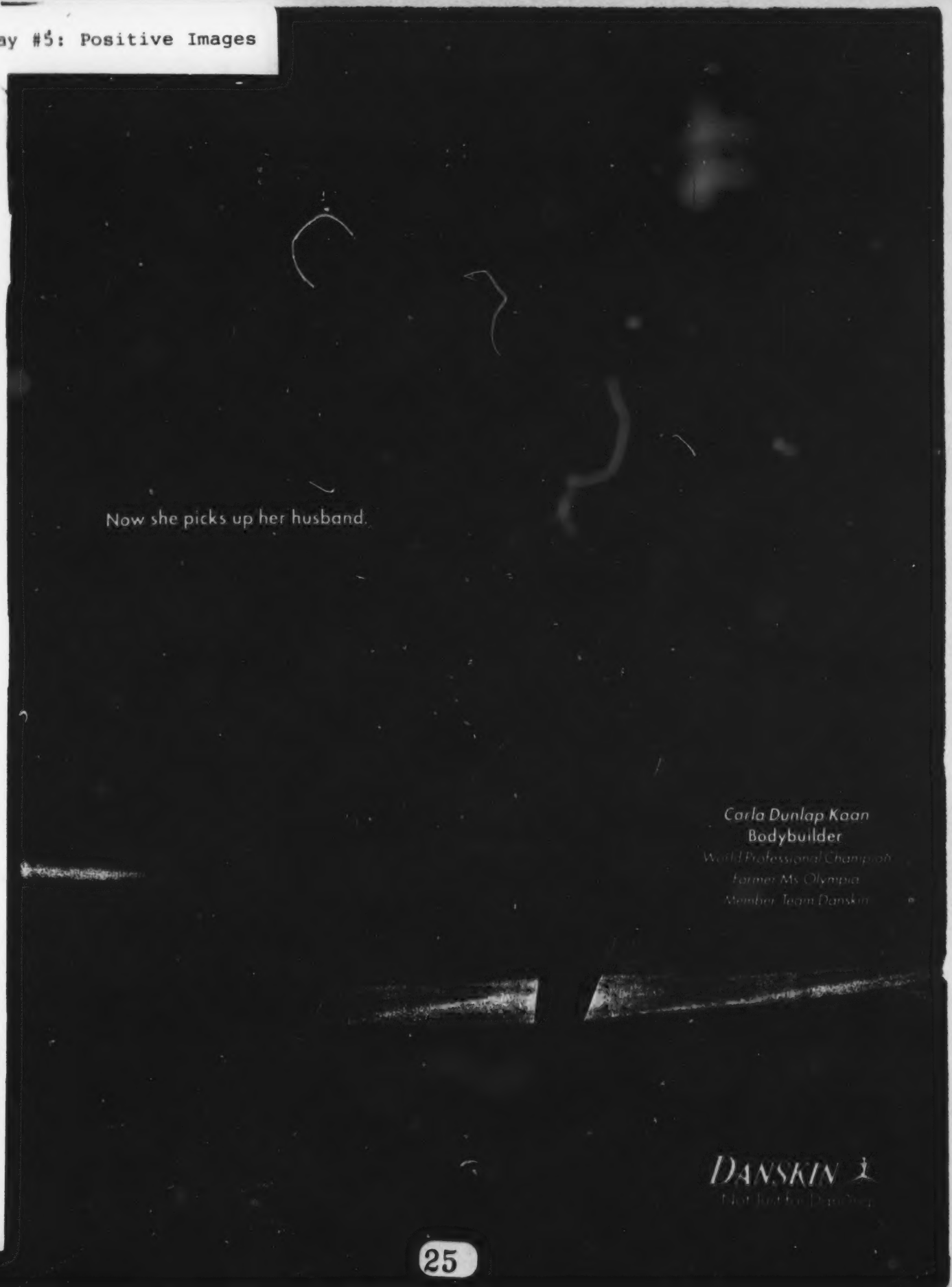
Day #5: Positive Images

12:00 p.m.

In the middle of a mountain bike trek through lush green hills above Lyle, Washington, Mary Williams, a graphic designer from Boise, Idaho, hops the barbed wire to continue her ride.

Photo by Dugald Bremner

Day #5: Positive Images



Sports People

Becky Spies

TIME, THE m
is especially pre
"This is going t
with *knees*) said
cocoa in the campus student center. "I'm going to Georgetown [for a medical school interview], Boston [for a track meet], Florida [another meet] and then back up to Boston [to interview at Harvard Medical School]."

Indeed, Spies's four years at Villanova have been a marvel of organization and stamina. The 21-year-old has successfully stitched her disparate interests together into an impressive quilt. While training twice a day, earning All-America honors four times, double-majoring in biology and philosophy, and maintaining a 3.86 GPA, Spies has also worked in soup kitchens and counseled fellow undergraduates about AIDS.

Last fall she applied to 19 medical schools and finished third in the NCAA cross-country championships, helping the Wildcat women win their sixth consecutive national title. In December she became the second student in school history to win a Rhodes scholarship. The first was her former teammate Nnenna Lynch, the 1992 NCAA 3,000-meter outdoor champion.

The youngest of three, Spies played soccer as a child. She took up running at age eight, after tagging along to a track meet in Livermore, Calif., her hometown, with her older brother, Brennan. At first she was a social runner, less likely to win a race than to miss its start because she was yakking when the gun went off. After suffering a stress fracture in her left shin in the eighth grade, she gave up soccer and quickly became one of the nation's best high school distance runners. Inspired by her older sister, Jessica, who won a track scholarship to Stanford, Spies competed with the goal of doing likewise, to ease the financial burden on her parents, Robert, a marine biologist, and Ann, a fourth-grade teacher.

By her senior year at Livermore High, *Track & Field News* ranked her first among the country's schoolgirl outdoor milers. She ran well—and often—during the summer after graduation, winning the 1,500 meters at the junior nationals in June 1990 and finishing second in that event at the Junior Pan-American Games in August. By the time she got to Villanova, she was burned out. She put on 20 pounds that fall and didn't make the cross-country team that was sent to the NCAAs. In her first collegiate track meet the following January, she ran the 800 in 2:21.3. "I hadn't run that slowly since eighth grade," she says.

Blood tests showed she had mononucleosis. Spies, who hadn't realized she was sick, had to take a monthlong break, then reinvent herself as a runner.

Marty Stern, who resigned as Villanova's coach last year, predicts Spies will continue improving and someday compete in the 1,500 meters at the Olympics. First, though, there's Oxford, which won't be all tea and crumpets. "A lot of people term [winning a Rhodes] an achievement," says Spies, who plans to study comparative social research and attend medical school later. "I look at it as a chance to see what you can make of two years at Oxford. Life doesn't stop with a Rhodes."

—MERRELL NODE

Day #5: Positive Images

Beat

News for the active woman

Rafting, Hollywood Style

A river mistress talks about her experiences with Meryl, Montana and the moviemaking machine.

For the last 12 years, Arlene Burns has been guiding herself and others down some of the rowdiest rivers in the world. All those adventures helped prepare her to act as Meryl Streep's trainer and stunt double on the set of *The River Wild*, a rapid-fire thriller from Universal Pictures, due out at the end of the month, in which Streep plays a river guide forced to pilot two strangers through deadly whitewater. How did Burns get the job? Serendipity.

"I was in Idaho visiting friends when the director and his people came to scout potential rivers to film," she explains. The guide who'd been lined up to give them suggestions was out of the country, so Burns filled in. "I was the first woman river guide they had ever met. Then and there, they said they didn't know in what capacity, but they wanted me on the team."

Director Curtis Hanson prepares Streep and Burns (right) for action.

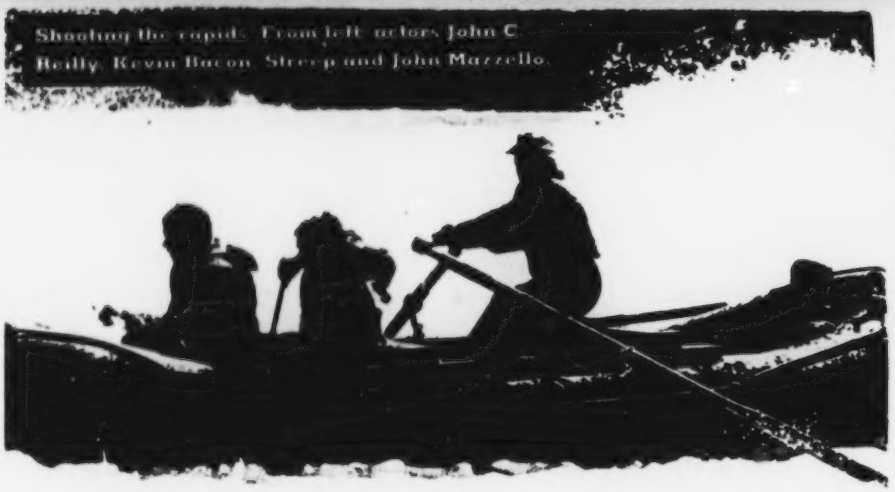
No act: Streep as oarswoman.

Neil Leifer

Though the prospect of going to Oregon and teaching Streep how to row interested her, a conflicting chance to attend the birthday party of 60s psychedelic icon, Timothy Leary, did too. "I was getting ready to drive from Colorado to Los Angeles, and the movie producers called," she says. "I told them I'd decide when I got to the intersection dividing the Oregon and L.A. routes. Somewhere in Nevada, I chose Oregon."

There she and Streep spent an intensive five days on the Rogue River. The actress was prepared, having conditioned herself over the previous six months by lifting weights, stretching, running and doing yoga. Burns was impressed by her commitment and intelligence. She'd sit behind Streep, letting her do the piloting and playing the voice in her head: *"What do you see? Which way do you think we should go?* I was sculpting her mind to make the right decisions, letting it be her own relationship with the river as much as possible."

Streep was ready for the real filming in Montana. Burns, however, was not. Used to calling her own shots, she found



Shooting the rapids. From left: actors John C. Reilly, Kevin Bacon, Streep and John Mazzello.

Roy Tompkins

herself at odds with Hollywood's layers of hierarchy and mercenary agenda. "A crew of 340 people supported a cast of five," she recalls. Part of the crew was a river unit consisting of some of the best whitewater, kayak and raft experts in the country. The problem, Burns discovered, was that the experts couldn't do much good if the powers that be refused to listen to them. She remembers one incident in which the director wanted them to run Kootenai Falls, off Kootenai River near the Canadian border. "People really wouldn't think of running that," says Burns. "It's been run about eight times, and seven people have died trying. But Hollywood doesn't know. They just liked the looks of it.

"That was a lot of pressure," she goes on. "I had my own integrity. I was the initial thorn in the side. But none of the guys wanted to run it, either. After a while we took it bit by bit, safely. Then it was reasonable. There was a lot of that kind of stuff."

The logistics of filming were equally difficult. River rafting is hard enough; doing it while keeping 4,000 pounds of generators, gaffers, cameras and other things dry and maneuverable on barges is something else altogether. "That's what got the marriage started between the Hollywood people and the river people," Burns remembers. "We all began to cooperate on systems and really learned from each other."

All that gear made it hard for the actors to do their jobs, too. "Meryl would often tell me that she had to visualize that one experience in Oregon to remind herself of what it was all about," Burns says. "That was the only time she got a feel for it, when she was moving downriver unencumbered."

Playing a river guide who has to pilot her family as well as her abductors to safety took on real-life meaning for Streep during the shooting. In many of the scenes she was actually the oarswoman, with four other actors in the boat. "She definitely felt an awesome responsibility," says Burns. Streep's adeptness, she feels, came from her ability to absorb information and desire to learn—qualities that "enable women to pick up things faster than a guy who might rely solely on his strength."

Even though Burns and fellow river rat Kelley Kalifitch doubled for Streep on the tough rapids, there was no way to ensure the actress's safety in every scene. "We would never put her in life-threatening situations, of course," explains Burns. "But the water was much stronger in Montana than in Oregon. She was on Class 3 water with a little bit of Class 4, and there were moments when her hands were full, and once she was thrown out of the raft. Water's a dynamic force. You can't say 'Cut!' and expect the raft to stop. But she was a great sport and got right back into the boat."

Besides doubling and training, Burns acted as the on-site safety adviser—"They wanted to cut the life jackets down so they'd look more flattering"—and environmental conscience. With the help of Streep, who is known for her environmentalism, the river unit subtly encouraged the filmmakers to do as much as possible, on film and off, to further river conservation. "People pay attention to movies," Burns observes. "It's strange how Hollywood people have become the heroes of our society."

Does she plan to work with those heroes in the future? Probably, she says. And—"unless I'm out of the country"—she'll definitely attend *The River Wild*'s debut. "For the premiere, the doubles were all thinking about pulling a gag. We were going to dress up in evening dresses and tuxes and show up in a limo looking like stars." WSF

—Allison Glock

Neil Lesser

The calm before the scene: Burns and Streep get grounded.

Melissa Moseley

Day #5: Positive Images

GAZINE OF HEALTH AND FITNESS

[M]innesota Sports

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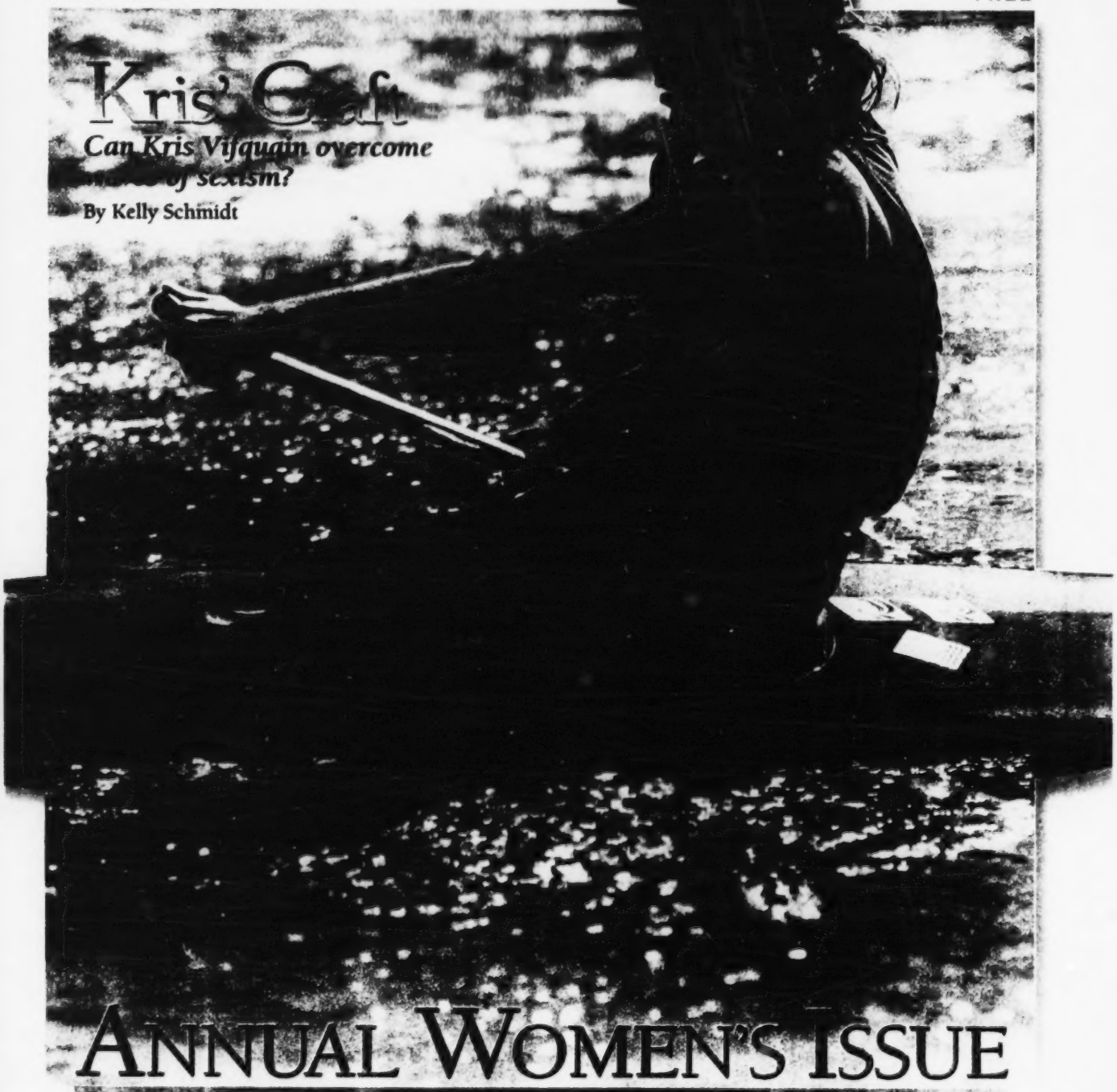

Kris' Craft

Can Kris Vijquain overcome [illegible] of sexism?

By Kelly Schmidt

ANNUAL WOMEN'S ISSUE

BREAKING TRADITION GUIDE TO LIFELONG NUTRITION
WHAT NOT TO GIVE UP FOR YOUR BABY

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